

THE TREND IN INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA (1983-1992)

The average rate of disputes over the period 1988/1992 as compared with 1983/1987, and as measured by the annual number of days lost per 1 000 workers, is still moving downwards in 11 Member States of the European Economic Area (EEA). In Sweden and Greece, despite clear falls in 1991 and 1992, this rate has increased over the previous period: it has gone up slightly in Spain but is still very high in relation to the average of the EEA. Despite a slight rise in 1992, Austria and Luxembourg still have the lowest rate in the European Economic Area (excluding Iceland) over the entire 10-year period. In general, the average rate in the European Economic Area (EEA) for the period for which data are available shows that the trend is virtually the same as within the Union.

There was a slight increase in industrial disputes in the European Union, as in the EEA, in 1992 this can be explained almost entirely by the steep rise in Spain and Germany (old Länder). The rate has also gone up quite clearly in Norway and Ireland, and to lesser degree in Belgium, Sweden and Portugal. It fell in the other States in 1992, particularly in Finland and Greece, though this latter country still has the highest average over the period 1983/1992.

The number of workers involved in these disputes was 9.936 million in the European Union in 1992 as opposed to 6.435 million in 1991 and 10.117 million in 1992 as opposed to 6.659 in 1991 for the EEA; this shows that the number of workers (56%) goes up much more than the days lost (+13%). The data available for the first quarter of 1993 indicate a further increase in the number of workers involved and the number of days lost in most of the Member States of the EEA.

Unlike the major socioeconomic aggregates such as population, employment and gross domestic product, where trends are reasonably regular, the series of industrial disputes is characterized by brusque movements: general strikes or sectoral strikes of long duration. There is a connection with negotiations (collective wage agreements, or budgetary or social aspects), which sometimes last

a long while and make a year on year comparison inappropriate.

Although year on year data are also available, Eurostat prefers to base most of its analysis on periods of five years as these give a better overall view of trends.

In all the intercountry comparisons, it is necessary to take account of the methodological comments on data comparability which are given at the end of this paper, particularly because of the existing different approaches to minimum thresholds for recording disputes and the exclusion of certain sectors.

In the case of Germany, the data always refer to the territory before 3 October 1990.

The basic indicator of disputes, the number of days lost per 1 000 workers, is the number of days lost owing to strikes or lockouts during one year related to the average number of workers during the same period.

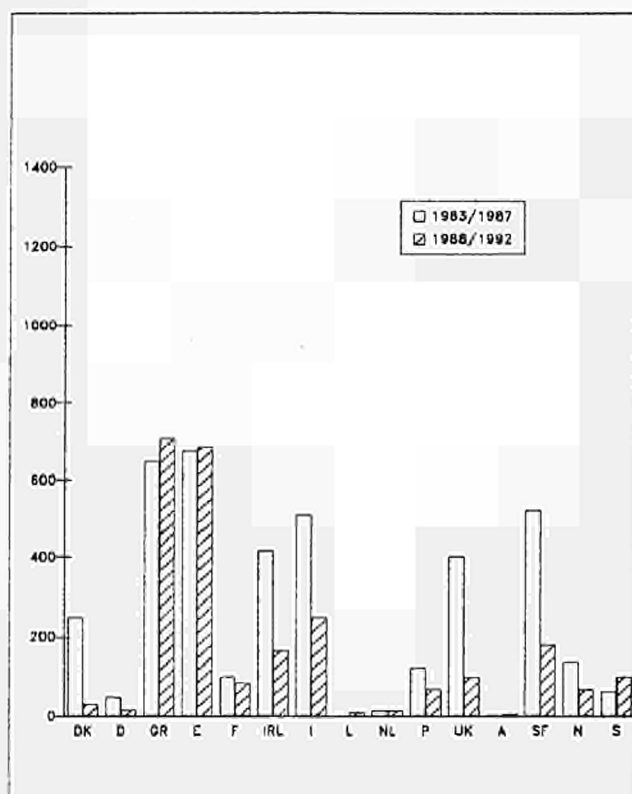
TRENDS IN INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES 1983/1992

Between the period 1983/1987 and 1988/1992, the rate of disputes went down steeply in eight states (Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, Portugal, Norway and Finland) and slightly in France, the Netherlands and Spain (though the latter has one of the highest levels). It went up slightly, but with extremely low historical values, in Austria and Luxembourg and somewhat more in Sweden. Greece only has had a steel increase. There was a slight increase in Spain but these values are very high over the 10 year period in relation to the EEA average. Comparison is not possible for Belgium as data for certain years are missing.

The Member States in which the rate is lowest for the period 1988/1992 (less than 20 days) are Austria with an average of five days, three years with virtually no disputes and one year with a limited amount (strikes in the service sector in 1991), Luxembourg with an average of 10 days, six years of zero disputes and only the PTT disputes of 1990 having had a certain impact, the Netherlands with an average of 15 days (stable with respect to the previous period) and the Federal Republic of Germany with an average of 7 days (65%) which had major disputes in the public sector in 1992.

In those countries with an average rate (between 20 and 100 days lost), there was a steep decline in Denmark (87% although the criteria for recording disputes underestimate the days lost compared to the other Member States) and in Norway (50% despite the significant increase in 1992). In Portugal (44%) the fall put this state amongst its historical minimum levels despite the slight increase in 1992.

Table 1: Days of work lost per 1000 workers: Total



In other states with a generally higher rate (more than 100 days), the decreases over 5 years are considerable.

This applies to the United Kingdom (76%), Finland (66%), Ireland (60%) and Italy (51%, though account is not taken of days lost for reasons not connected with working conditions which are important in this country). The fall is more gradual in France, (15%), though the average is also close to historical minimum levels.

In Greece, Sweden and to a lesser extent in Spain, the trend continues to be in the opposite direction to that of the other States of the EEA. Greece (710 days lost on average or +9%) has always had the highest level in the EEA which is due on the whole to a succession of general repetitive strikes (particularly in 1987 and 1990), and disputes in the public sector though the trend seems to have reversed over the last two years.

In Spain (687 days on average from 1988/1992 but a rise of 2%), the situation is characterized by frequent general disputes at sectoral and regional level and by general strikes (1985 and 1988).

In Sweden, the general level is much lower (100 days on average) but the increase between periods is considerable (+57%) due to the industrial disputes of 1988 and 1990, though there was a clear reduction in 1991 and 1992.

THE DISPUTE RATE IN 1992

The year 1992 saw a slight increase over 1991: +12% in the European Union and +18% in the European Economic Area.

The average increase in the number of days lost in the EEA in 1992 results mainly from rises in Spain and Germany. In the latter country (+44%) this was chiefly due to certain regional disputes whereas in Germany (+900%) the disputes in the public sector were the underlying cause. In Norway (disputes in the extractive industries) and Ireland (+125%), the rate also went up, quite spectacularly in 1992, but the weight of these two figures is low in the averages of the Union and the EEA. On the other hand, increases were much lower in Belgium, Portugal and Sweden.

In the other states, a downward trend was the general rule, particularly in Greece (56% which nevertheless has the highest figures for the period 1988/1992) and in Finland (-83%). The falls in the United Kingdom (-29%) and in France (-23%) are also noteworthy, these countries attaining the lowest values since the second World War.

The lowest figures in 1992 were recorded in Austria (3 days), Luxembourg (3 days), Sweden (7 days) and the Netherlands (15 days).

The initial figures available for 1993 show an increase in the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium and Italy (general strikes) and a clear fall in Spain.

THE NUMBER OF WORKERS INVOLVED IN INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN 1992

In absolute terms, the number of workers involved in industrial disputes went up in 1992. In the European Union, it went from 6 435 million in 1991 to 9 936 million in 1992 and from 6 659 in 1991 to 10 117 million in 1992 in the European Economic Area. This is explained largely by the greater number on strike in Spain (almost 50% of the total) and to a lesser extent in Italy and Germany.

Intercountry comparisons show, as in the preceding years, slight increases in numbers on strike although the number of days lost fell, which con-

firms the trend noted for years towards a shorter duration of disputes and hence of individual costs.

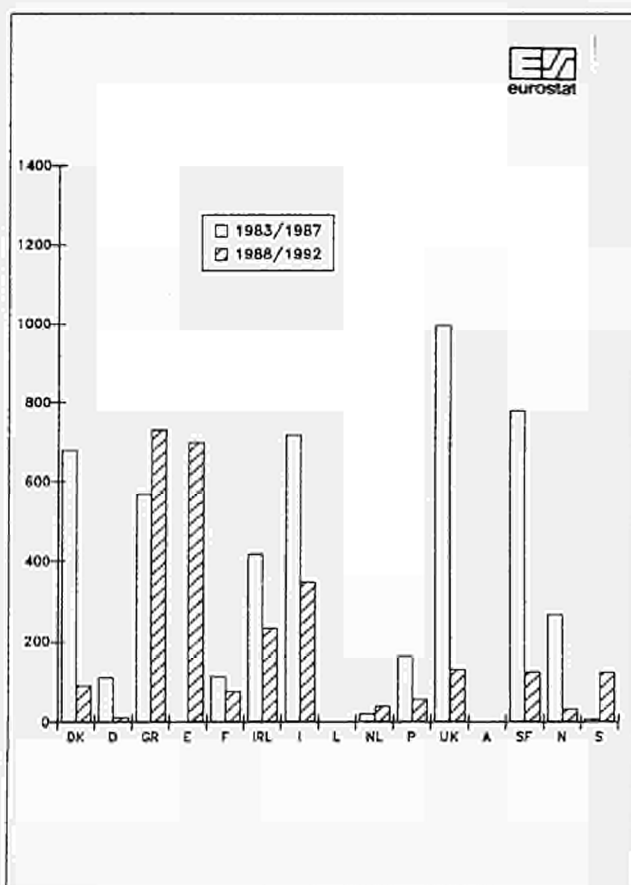
DISPUTES BY SECTOR

The breakdown by sector of the number of days of work lost shows a downward trend in industry and a slight upward trend in the services sector. In agriculture, the situation is of marginal importance.

Industrial or labour disputes in the agricultural sector are limited to the States in southern Europe where there are still considerable numbers employed as in Spain and Italy. Nevertheless, Sweden saw a major dispute in this sector in 1989.

In the industrial sector (Table 2), the dispute rate is downward in most Member States. Where it is low, the average trend between two periods such as 1983/87 and 1988/1992 may result from an exceptional year. In the Federal Republic of Germany, the metallurgical dispute of 1984 must not make one lose sight of the persistent rise in the period 1982/1992. In Norway, the major disputes of 1986 were followed by calmer years except in 1990.

Table 2: Days of work lost per 1 000 workers. Industry



In the Netherlands, the dispute in the building industry in 1990 is explained by the interperiod increase (+97%) although the overall level is average (40 days). In Portugal (-65%) and France (-32%), the falls are more constant and amount to 57 and 77 days respectively. In those countries where the average is higher, one must stress the clear reductions in the United Kingdom (87%), Finland (84%), Italy (52%) and Ireland (54%). In the case of Sweden, its average for 1988/1992 is influenced by the scale of the disputes in the extractive industries in 1988 to such an extent that the dispute rate in 1992 is zero in the industrial sector.

In Greece (+28%), with an average close to that for the economy as a whole, the dispute rate in industry is always persistent. In Spain and Belgium, where the interperiod comparison is impossible as there is no reliable breakdown for 1982/1987, the average is close to that for the total though there is a high figure for the extractive and manufacturing industries.

The breakdown by sector of activity (ISIC classification) shows contrasting trends for the period 1988/1992; in manufacturing industry, the development is close to that as in industry as a whole.

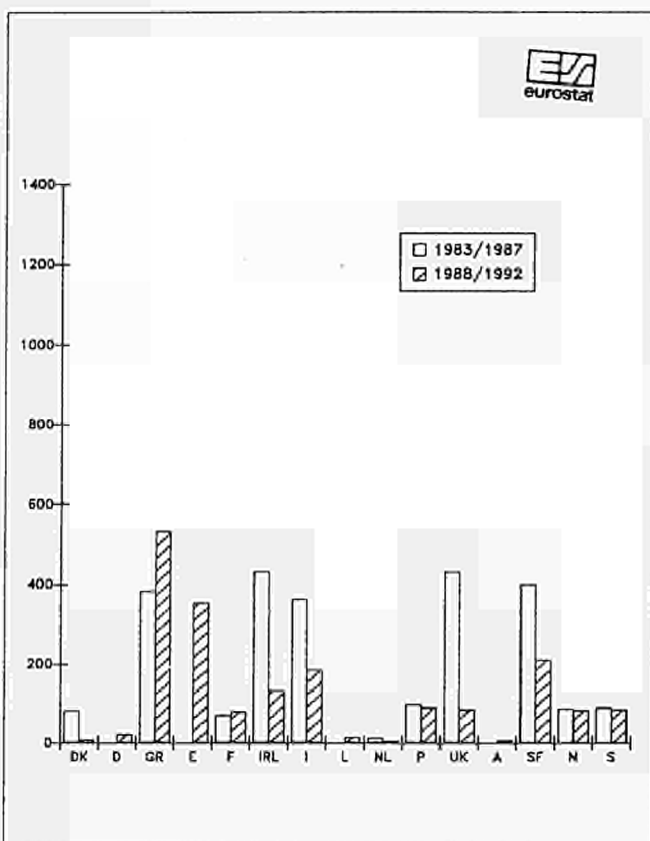
The building industry is slightly below the industrial average (with the exception of Spain and the Netherlands).

In the extractive industries, certain states record a large number of days lost which always coincide with major restructuring in mining regions. This applies to Spain (average of 4 582 days lost), Belgium (3 532 days) and Greece (2 453 days). In the United Kingdom, where the miners' strike of 1983 raised the 1983/1987 average to 18 538 days, the downward trend has continued over the past few years. In Norway, disputes in the petroleum industry in 1986 and 1990 were particularly important, as was the 1985 dispute in Sweden.

In the other states, the situation in the extractive industries is close to that for industry as a whole.

In the services sector (Table 3), where the number of workers has steadily increased over the past few years, the dispute rate has moved upward. This applies to the Federal Republic of Germany (disputes in the public services in 1990 and 1992). In Austria and Luxembourg, the trend is slightly upward despite low averages; the increase is most clearly seen in France (+12%) and Greece (+39%). The decline rate is lower than the general average in the United Kingdom (21%), in Portugal (7%), Norway (5%) and Sweden (5%).

Table 3: Days of work lost per 1000 workers. Services



On the other hand, the decreases are significant in Denmark (89%), Ireland (69%), the Netherlands (59%), Italy (49%) and Finland. In Spain and Belgium, where the interperiod comparison is impossible as there is no breakdown for 1982/1987, the average is lower than that for the whole of the economy.

The sectoral breakdown gives low dispute rates with respect to the average for the distributive trades and the hotel business, and low values though on the increase for banks and insurance (particularly in Greece, Finland and Sweden). On the other hand, the averages are higher in the transport sector (particularly in Spain and Italy) and there are some remarkable increases in Germany, Norway and Sweden. Finally, the public services sector (despite the lack of data for certain Member States) seems generally to be slightly above the average for services.

Table 4: Variations in hourly earnings 1983/1992

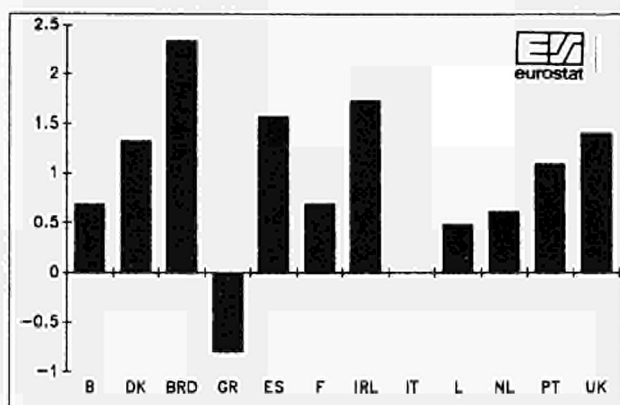


Table 5: Variation in the employment rate 1983/1992

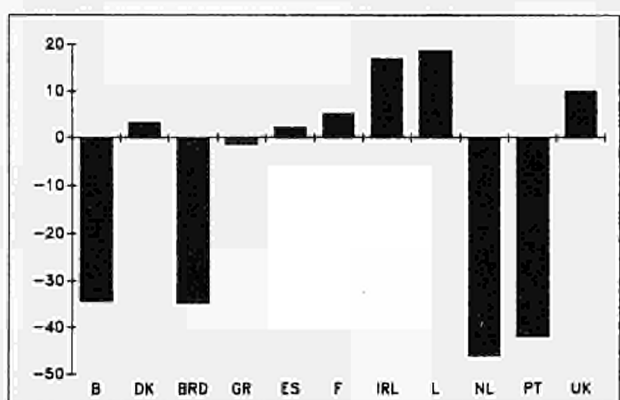


Table 6: Variation in union membership 1983/1991

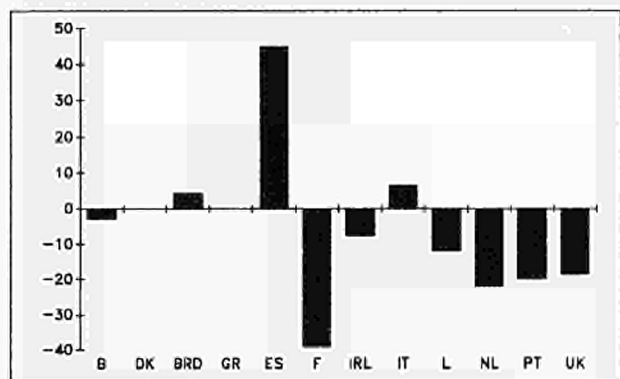
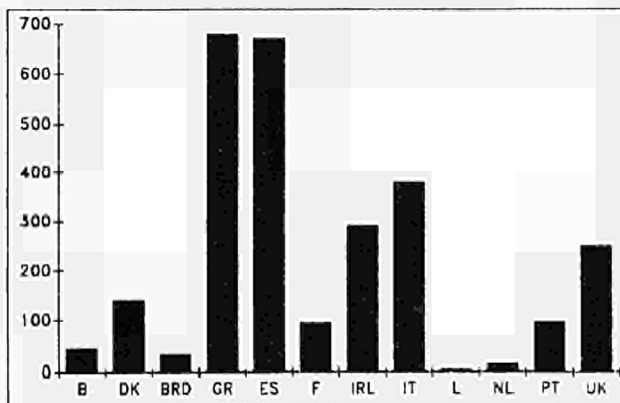


Table 7: Average rate of disputes 1983/1992



INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES AND OTHER AGGREGATES PERTAINING TO THE LABOUR MARKET

The relationship between the amount of disputes and the development of other economic aggregates has always been difficult to establish by means of a correlation model. Nevertheless, it is clear that the trend in the former influences and is influenced by such aggregates as unemployment, the variations in hourly earnings and union membership.

Tables 4 to 7 show the development of these variables as annual rates. The variation in earnings (Table 4) refers to wages expressed in ecu deflated by consumer price indices between 1983 and 1992. The variation in unemployment rates (Table 5) refers to comparable rates calculated by Eurostat between 1983 and 1992. The variation in union membership (Table 6) shows the development of this variable calculated from data provided by trade unions and Labour Ministries between 1983 and 1991 (the data for 1992 are not yet available), with the exception of Ireland (1983/1988), Luxembourg (1981/1989) and Portugal (1980/1987). In the latter case, the trend in industrial disputes is measured by the average rate between 1983 and 1992 (Table 7).

These tables reflect very different trends within the European Union:

- amongst the countries with a high dispute rate, Greece is at the top though it is the only state where a fall in hourly workings has occurred, whereas unemployment has been virtually stable for the entire 10 year period. (There are no data on union membership). In Spain, the trend differs because the increase in hourly earnings is considerable and unemployment has remained at the same level (always high). Union membership has gone up considerably though the starting point was very low.

- Amongst the countries with a low dispute rate, Luxembourg has had an increase in unemployment and hourly workings and reduced union membership. On the other hand, for Germany, with the greatest increase in hourly earnings in the Union, unemployment has gone down in the old Länder.

ESTIMATES OF STRIKES BY CAUSE

The breakdown by country of the causes of strikes presents certain problems of comparability in view of the different approaches and the absence of statistics in some cases. Nevertheless, Eurostat estimates that disputes connected with collective wage agreements represent one third of the total. These disputes are usually sector wide and there is a reduction in enterprise level disputes. There is also a clear reduction in disputes caused solely by the demand for higher wages which represent around 13% of the total. The increase in disputes connected with late payments is apparent. In certain countries, disputes arising from layoffs are clearly on the increase (Spain, France and the United Kingdom), and in general, disputes deriving from restructuring in certain sectors (particu-

larly the extractive industries) is going up. On the other hand, disputes directly connected with shorter working hours represent such a small proportion of the total (6%) that one may assume that this aspect is covered by collective wage agreements.

Disputes relating to working conditions have been relatively stable during the period (8/10%) and there are still disputes connected with the recognition of union ability to negotiate (particularly in Ireland and the United Kingdom). During the 10 year period, general strikes deriving from negotiations between governments and unions have taken place in Greece, Italy and Spain; to a lesser extent, intersectoral disputes have taken place in Germany and France.

DATA COMPARABILITY

The principles for drawing up statistics on industrial disputes are given in the ILO Resolution of statistics on strikes lockouts etc. which was adopted at the 15th International Conference on Labour Statisticians (1993). Nevertheless, this Resolution is not applied in the same fashion in all the Member States of the European Economic Area. International comparisons must therefore be treated with caution. The main methodological differences concern:

a) **the exclusion of certain sectors and regions:** France does not include strikes in agriculture; disputes in the public sector is only included from 1982. Portugal has not included these strikes since 1986 and Belgium does not include them at all. Spain has no figures for Catalonia for the period 1983/85. For these four Member States, these sectors or regions are not, therefore, always included in total employment for calculating the days lost per 1 000 workers. Denmark does not include the strikes of companies which are not members of national employers' associations.

b) **excluding certain types of strike:** In the case of Italy, only disputes deriving from work relations are included and the numerous days lost for political reasons are therefore excluded. The United Kingdom also excludes strikes for political reasons and Portugal excludes general strikes.

c) **the minimum dimension of the disputes for recording purposes:** Denmark does not account for strikes resulting in less than 100 work days lost which adversely affects comparability with the other Member States. Ireland and Norway exclude strikes which last less than one day. In Greece, Spain and Finland, strikes which last less than one hour and in the

United Kingdom and Germany, those which last less than one day or involve less than ten workers (unless the total days lost exceeds 100) are also excluded. In France, strikes are excluded if the product of days not worked multiplied by the number of workers involved is lower than 8 hours. Sweden includes strikes exceeding eight hours even if eight persons stop work for only one hour each. There are no minimum limits in the other Member States of the European Economic Area.

d) **the unity of disputes:** disputes are always considered as starting in local units although France distinguishes local disputes from general disputes. This country only breaks down local disputes by sector, excluding those enterprises with several working locations which leads to a sector under-evaluation.

e) **data collection:** enterprises are not obliged to supply information on strikes (except in Germany) and statistics are therefore generally dependent on administrations. In Denmark, the employer's association is responsible for such collection. In Norway and Finland, the responsibility is shared between the employers' associations and the trade unions. In Spain, responsibility is shared between central and regional administrations which has reduced the pertinence of sectoral statistics before 1988. In Austria, trade unions are responsible. Italy and Greece collect data by hours lost (conversion to days lost is done by Eurostat).

f) **break in the series:** in Spain since 1986 (change of method), in Portugal since 1986 (exclusion of the public sector) and in France since 1982 (inclusion of the public sector).

g) **breakdown of workers:** this is done according to the ISIC. Nevertheless, the lack of precision on the number of workers in the public sector in France, Belgium and Portugal does not enable category 9 to be calculated (collective services).

EEE	UE	B	DK	D	GR	ES	F	IRL	I	L	NL	P	UK	A	SF	N	S
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WORKING DAYS LOST PER 1000 EMPLOYEES

Total

1983	:	:	:	36	2	324	720	102	382	975	0	27	229	178	0	361	4	9
1984	:	:	:	61	246	275	1087	132	471	611	0	7	99	1278	0	754	62	8
1985	:	:	46	1041	2	618	546	69	520	266	0	20	101	299	8	84	38	127
1986	:	:	:	40	1	712	335	106	378	390	0	8	145	90	1	1353	575	171
1987	:	:	:	58	1	1317	692	98	327	316	0	11	42	164	2	64	7	4
1988	230	238	75	40	2	505	1509	106	177	224	3	2	70	166	0	88	45	199
1989	173	180	50	23	4	702	454	174	62	300	0	4	123	182	1	98	10	101
1990	156	152	38	42	15	1720	283	67	266	341	33	37	50	83	3	446	79	188
1991	94	104	25	30	6	432	486	48	100	195	11	17	41	34	19	230	1	5
1992	111	120	40	27	60	192	701	37	223	182	3	15	63	24	3	39	208	7
83/87	:	:	:	247	50	649	676	101	416	512	0	15	123	402	2	523	137	64
88/92	153	159	46	32	17	710	687	86	166	248	10	15	69	98	5	180	69	100
% var	:	:	:	-87	-65	9	2	-15	-60	-51	-	0	-44	-76	-	-66	-50	57

Industry

1983	:	:	:	100	4	566	:	163	385	1607	0	1	307	337	0	437	7	6
1984	:	:	:	180	550	610	:	170	592	770	0	8	170	3608	0	834	8	14
1985	:	:	102	2898	2	619	:	95	476	434	0	59	174	732	1	193	131	7
1986	:	:	:	116	2	365	:	73	187	350	0	25	119	184	0	2287	1190	3
1987	:	:	:	113	3	693	:	65	450	435	0	9	41	125	1	145	3	11
1988	:	226	75	118	4	703	1148	130	237	255	0	3	39	279	0	223	5	653
1989	:	168	113	59	6	408	744	111	98	282	0	8	85	138	0	148	6	40
1990	:	192	98	103	10	1610	359	46	735	616	0	127	57	177	2	101	112	8
1991	:	152	65	96	13	471	759	55	58	308	0	40	41	43	0	64	0	5
1992	:	121	80	82	24	468	497	45	38	278	0	23	62	18	0	88	44	0
83/87	:	:	:	681	112	571	0	113	418	719	0	20	162	997	0	779	268	8
88/92	:	172	86	92	11	732	701	77	233	348	0	40	57	131	0	125	33	143
% var	:	:	:	-87	-90	28	:	-32	-44	-52	0	97	-65	-87	-	-84	-87	-

Services

1983	:	:	:	13	0	138	:	51	397	503	0	39	176	98	0	335	2	11
1984	:	:	:	16	5	47	:	106	423	498	0	6	41	120	0	748	87	4
1985	:	:	17	332	1	531	:	41	568	145	0	4	41	92	0	25	1	186
1986	:	:	:	10	0	585	:	83	499	432	0	2	188	47	0	876	338	254
1987	:	:	:	37	0	615	:	76	277	240	0	13	43	186	0	23	9	1
1988	140	150	76	10	0	441	755	84	154	180	4	1	112	120	0	20	63	2
1989	171	177	15	8	3	407	212	196	46	356	0	3	175	205	1	75	11	143
1990	120	103	6	18	18	1436	205	64	27	177	49	2	47	45	1	641	69	271
1991	:	55	3	4	1	335	196	31	126	101	17	8	45	32	30	307	2	6
1992	:	:	31	6	86	49	404	24	313	117	5	12	76	27	4	12	271	10
83/87	:	:	:	82	1	383	0	71	433	364	0	13	98	109	0	401	87	91
88/92	:	:	26	9	22	534	354	80	133	186	15	5	91	86	7	211	83	86
% var	:	:	:	-89	-	39	:	12	-69	-49	-	-59	-7	-21	-	-47	-5	-5

EEE	UE	BE	DK	BRD	GR	ES	FR	IRL	IT	LX	NL	PT	UK	AT	FIN	N	SW
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NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES INVOLVED IN STOPPAGES

	Total																	
1983	:	:	:	40,9	94,1	224,3	:	617,2	30,5	6844,2	0,0	20,3	273,6	573,8	0,2	419,9	1,0	14,4
1984	:	:	:	60,8	537,3	155,3	:	555,0	31,0	7356,5	0,2	16,2	230,5	1464,3	0,3	558,7	30,6	23,7
1985	9944	9607	34,3	581,3	78,2	785,7	:	549,1	168,7	4842,8	0,2	22,6	199,0	791,3	35,5	170,0	6,6	124,5
1986	:	:	:	56,7	115,5	1106,4	948,9	455,7	50,0	3606,7	0,0	17,0	231,5	720,2	3,2	589,0	165,6	66,3
1987	:	:	:	56,9	155,0	1809,2	2021,8	359,7	26,2	4272,7	0,0	12,6	81,4	887,4	7,2	98,9	2,5	10,5
1988	12132	11856	23,1	29,6	33,5	449,4	7243,6	403,2	10,2	2712,1	0,4	5,2	155,5	790,3	0,0	172,4	8,3	95,2
1989	8336	8130	19,5	27,2	43,9	795,7	1451,4	298,5	3,7	4451,8	0,0	15,4	296,1	727,0	3,7	157,2	11,3	34,1
1990	5307	4961	10,3	37,4	257,2	1304,0	977,0	277,8	10,3	1634,0	0,6	25,0	128,9	298,2	5,3	206,9	60,7	73,2
1991	6659	6435	11,1	37,9	208,5	476,6	1983,8	408,2	18,0	2951,2	2,1	42,1	119,1	176,4	92,7	128,0	0,4	2,5
1992	10113	9936	30,2	32,9	598,4	243,1	5192,1	318,2	13,1	3178,4	0,6	52,4	131,9	144,4	18,0	102,6	36,3	18,0

For further information consult:
 Publication "Duration and organisation of the work" (under preparation)
 EUROSTAT Unit E-3 "Working Conditions"
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 José António PINHEIRO (Tel: 4301-34416)